

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NASSAU 1134

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EFIS, BF

SUBJ: SPINY LOBSTER

1. THE NASSAU GUARDIAN MONDAY, JULY 14, 1975, CARRIES A FRONT-PAGE STORY HEADLINED "SHOWDOWN LOOMS WITH FLORIDA-BASED LOBSTER FISHERMEN." THE SUBSTANCE OF THE STORY REPORTS THAT AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES MINISTER R. F. ANTHONY ROBERTS HAS SIGNED THE ORDER DESIGNATING THE SPINY LOBSTER AS A CREATURE OF THE BAHAMIAN CONTINENTAL SHELF WITH ROBERTS INDICATING THAT THE ORDER WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE AUGUST 1 TO COINCIDE WITH THE OPENING OF THE CRAWFISH SEASON.

2. STORY CONTINUES BY STATING THAT THE LAW IS LIKELY TO INSTIGATE A "SHOWDOWN" BETWEEN FLORIDA-BASED FISHERMEN AND THE BAHAMAS MARINE POLICE WITH ROBERTS STATING THAT THE POLICE "WILL BE EXPECTED TO DO THEIR DUTIES."

3. THE STORY ALSO DESCRIBES CONGRESSMAN PAUL RODGERS' ATTEMPT TO INTRODUCE FEDERAL LEGISLATION. A RODGERS AIDE IS QUOTED AS STATING THAT THE BILL "WOULD BRING
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EVERYONE'S ABUSES TO A STOP, BECAUSE WE WOULD HAVE

THE SAME CRITERIA AS THE BAHAMAS GOVERNMENT."

4. REFERENCE IS ALSO MADE TO LEGISLATION PASSED BY THE U. S. CONGRESS "WORDED ALMOST IDENTICALLY SIMILAR" TO THE BAHAMIAN LEGISLATION. ARTICLE CONCLUDES BY STATING THAT FLORIDA FISHERMEN UNCERTAIN ABOUT THE EFFECT OF THE NEW LAW CAN CONTACT THE MIAMI OFFICE OF THE BAHAMAS MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS.

5. COMMENT: AS EMBASSY HAS REPORTED IN EARLIER MESSAGES, ROBERTS HAS CONSISTENTLY TAKEN EXTREME POSITION WITHIN GCOB AND IT THEREFORE COMES AS NO SURPRISE THAT HE WOULD BE SPEAKING IN CONFRONTATION TERMS. THIS IS, OF COURSE, QUITE CONTRARY TO THE LINE AND THE TONE ADVANCED BY THE PRIMIN TO ME. THE FACT THAT ROBERTS DISCUSSED THIS MATTER WITH THE PRESS ON SUNDAY MAY SUGGEST AN ATTEMPT ON HIS PART TO BRING PRESSURE ON THE PRIMIN AND THE CABINET TO TAKE A TOUGHER STAND. THERE IS NO QUESTION BUT THAT THERE ARE FOOLISH ELEMENTS IN THE BAHAMIAN GOVERNMENT WHO WOULD SEEM TO PREFER CONFRONTATION EVEN THOUGH THIS IS CLEARLY NOT IN GCOB INTEREST. TO DATE AT LEAST, THIS HAS NOT BEEN THE PREVAILING OPINION AND SO LONG AS USG IS WISE ENOUGH ITSELF TO CONTINUE TO AVOID A CONFRONTATION APPROACH THERE IS EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT DESPITE ROBERTS' TOUGH TALK THE ISSUE CAN BE RESOLVED IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH REASONABLE PROTECTION OF U. S. AND GCOB INTERESTS AND WITHOUT CONFRONTATION. HOWEVER, THE ARTICLE DOES POINT UP THE RATHER SHORT TIME-FUSE UNDER WHICH WE ARE WORKING AND THE EMOTIONAL AND POLITICAL PRESSURES WHICH EXIST IN NASSAU ON THE ISSUE.
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